

Born 4/26/46

2/8/70

Dear Gary (copies to others),

You encouraged me to read "Special Unit Senator", I presume from reviews, and I have, having also read reviews. Harwood, in the Wash Post, for example, said it says nothing new but had to be written, right on both counts. It is the kind of book a publisher who broke at least two contracts for books critical of the Warren Commission could enjoy doing. It is, in fact, a book deeply indebted to the Warren Report by men who profited from it and sought, to the degree possible to avoid repeating the same mistakes - while taking the same approach.

Appropriately, there is no single citation of source, though there are a few footnotes (the entire trial is covered in a single sentence of one), and there are length quotations that are dubious. There is, likewise and for the obvious reasons, no index, which facilitates not finding anything. There is incompleteness (for example, the fictitious Arab threat against Nixon, an obvious contrivance when it was first reported, had ended with acquittal before this book was finished but there is no reference to the acquittal and the case is handled like the real thing).

I am familiar with some of it. Although not named, I am apparently a very small part of it. This gross distortion makes it easy for me to believe little is to be trusted without separate confirmation. In other cases, I have tapes of what is quoted directly, and the direct quotes do not match the tapes of the same, unidentified witnesses). In most cases, there is a deliberate avoidance of names, but in some, those the authors want to shaft are named. How more authoritative can you be than by avoiding a large percentage of the names?

Major holes are only too obvious. For example, the Chrysler car the keys to which were found on Sirhan is said to have been accessible to many keys. There is no reference to the name or identification of the owner, no reference to any fingerprinting, etc., but how glowingly the finding of Sirhan's fingerprints in his own car is described. Sirhan is said to have bought large quantities of ammo and to have fired it at a range, with repeated references throughout. BUT, 37,815 shells were laboriously collected and examined (266) and not a single one was traced to the Sirhan pistol. Can there be more persuasive proof that he used that range? It is alleged that there was an exhaustive investigation of the possibility of conspiracy, with the most meticulous reconstruction of times. Yet where there is any specific reference, hours at a time are not accounted for. The only investigation of conspiracy that seems to have been made is one in which it was determined that those alleged could not be proven by those making the claim. The Crispin Curriel Gonzalez story is in open contradiction to the undisputed news stories of the time, and the girl friend, found immediately by the press, was not found by the LAPD until months later, which is almost as good as the FBI. One could go on and on with this ~~initial~~ toilet tissue called a book. It is so transparent that if what it alleges is true it is so evasively, so selectively, so incompetently and incompletely done it cannot be credited by those with any reasonably clear recollection of the reporting of the period. It is a popular but a crummy job. Smooth, but so is much waste matter.

The book ends by saying the case is a ringing endorsement of fair treatment, of justice, and open (4) with the open admission that while Sirhan had insisted from the beginning that he didn't want to talk, every trick was used to bet him to and it was secretly found.

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and it was secretly taped. Paralleling this is the trick with which the Sirhan house was searched without a warrant and over the objections of ~~himself~~ one of the brothers, who was asked. The prisoner wasn't and it was his property that was sought-and obtained.(88)

The devices of the WR and its defenders are frequently employed, one example(88) is describing an American engineer who had spent years in Arab lands and was fluent in the various dialects as "a man who said he spoke Arabic", this introduction serving to cast into doubt the entirely undisputed story he told of what he had heard, spoken in a dialect he identified. There are the clever passages for the WR ~~critics~~ critics, like (96) "There were the clever people, as usual, standing to profit by the cry of conspiracy, hooking their theories to journalistic wagons before the Arlington soil was tamped..." from the author of this pot-boiler?

Of the scene of the crime (97), where the number of proven shots is never given, "even the doors have holes in them which can be mistaken for bullet holes". With the known maximum capacity of the pistol, such writing would have more meaning and come closer to representing integrity of purpose if the shooting had been limited to the capacity of that weapon.

The politics are incredible. Sirhan had an unnamed "Communist friend" whose Communism is reflected by his description of Sirhan's anti-Israeli views as "right- reactionary". This is perhaps the "new" Communism? This friend found Sirhan an anarchist, then natural friend of a Communist (never named)(165). Sirhan also is said to have espoused Anarchy (167) Thus there was an extensive search for a "Communist " conspiracy to kill Kennedy. But with evidence that Sirhan got American Nazi Party and similar literature (222,231), why should there be any investigation to determine whether there was a conspiracy of this character? So, there wasn't.

Duarte, never named, is shown to have claimed Sirhan was where he ~~proves~~ proveably wasn't, and the man he said was Sirhan is identified (169).

With the allegedly elaborate tracing of all the time Sirhan could have had to conspire, the results said to show no possibility of conspiracy, there is, among the many things not accounted for, what is mentioned (2301 and elsewhere), his interest in and attendance at meetings of mystics. Here is an example of the way every minute is accounted for, this one of the more crucial days, June 3 (264): "Sirhan drove off from the Richfield station at 11 a.m. What he did between that time and approximately 4:30 P.M. is not known". Superb proof! Pretty much the same is true of the next day (265), despite the tricky writing designed to persuade that every minute was accounted for. The fact is this alleged disproof provides much more time that would have been required for the elaborate planning of an elaborate conspiracy. Naturally, of course, there is logic to show there was no conspiracy, for had there been the other two exits Kennedy would have used would have been covered. The proof that they weren't can be stated more briefly than the chief of detectives and his reformed sportswriter of the statist tendencies puts it by saying that none of the hotel employees saw anybody with signs announcing their intention to kill RFK if he went their way.

There is an unintended ghouliah touch on 300, where it is stated "Much has been learned from the investigation...from it will come a manual", one can expect for whitewashing. Immediately thereafter(302), this enormous investigation of which we read, described as "columinous", fit in "four locked cabinets", hardly the size of my personal one and not at all of the magnitude to reflect the enormity of investigation claimed for so long a period by so many men. But fear not, like Texas, they have "boiled" it down to "10 illustrated bound volumes", two copies of which are with the LAPD and one with the US AG.

The similarities with the WR are often striking, as with the alleged accounting of Sorhan's finances that are said to have been computed to almost exactly the sum found on who. With no figures given who can gainsay them?

This is not the only benefit of the WR reflected in this work. After all this hogwash claiming there was no conspiracy, it closes (304) with the proper disclaimer, the reputation save, and a fairly open hint they expect contrary proof (304): "I do not know that I have ever considered any case completely closed. Simply because we deal with people, the possibility ~~xxxxxx~~ always exists that information will emerge long after the accused has received a verdict...Therefore, the files of any criminal investigation should never be completely closed", even after the sentence is carried out- like Oswald; like Hoover; like LBJ.

Interestingly, the effort to refute the possibility of conspiracy is pretty much limited to the nut cases. As a reflection of the seriousness with which the case was investigated or the diligence with which it is here reported, there is nothing of any consequence I didn't recall after a year and a half. The only two new things are, to me, the number of casings checked in that misrepresented futility and the identification of the man Duarte called Sirhan.

It's a helluva book, Gary. This is but a hasty commentary after a hasty reading in which I didn't take time to make a single not, merely marking a few pages in the margin as I skimmed. A real analysis would be a humdinger.

This is a frightfully bad book, succeeding in such impossibilities as being unfair to Garrison's LA sycophants, which is pretty hard to do. It is a clever work of propaganda that skilfully weaves in a few of the necessary references to the extremists who are part of the story but always leaving them and the extreme groups out, avoiding mention of a single Arab extremist whose connection with Sirhan are inherent in the writing. But so few people know anything about it there is little prospect it will not be accepted as a definitive study, one that ends all questions.

Without doubt its purpose.

It leaves me interest in a number of people, one in particular, is anything is known of him, George Erhard, Jr., who is said to have sold this cheap weapon, second-hand, for much more than its value new and to a man he knew could not, legally, own any weapon (nothing has happened to him of which I know for his violation of the law, but why should it when it only led to the murder of a Kennedy?). I wonder what his connections are.

Because I read this book in haste and note these comments the same way, I encourage others not to take my word or opinions but to read their own.